

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (previously presented). A process for preparing pitch with increased optically anisotropic content, comprising the steps of:  
  
    mixing a mixture consisting essentially of from about 10 % to about 70 % by weight of synthetic mesophase pitch and from about 90 % to about 30 % by weight of petroleum-derived isotropic pitch to prepare a pitch mixture; and heat-soaking the resultant pitch mixture at a temperature of from about 350° C to about 450° C for about 2 to about 25 hours to convert isotropic pitch to optically anisotropic mesophase pitch.
2. Canceled.
3. (previously presented). The process of claim 2, wherein said step of heat-soaking includes heating the pitch mixture, in an inert atmosphere.
4. Canceled.
5. Canceled.
6. Canceled.
7. Canceled.
8. Canceled.
9. Canceled.
10. Canceled.
11. Canceled.

12. Canceled.
13. Canceled.
14. Canceled.
15. (amended) A process for preparing pitch with optically anisotropic content, comprising the steps of:
  - mixing from about 10% to about 70% of synthetic mesophase pitch and from about 90% to about 30% by weight of petroleum-derived isotropic pitch to prepare a pitch mixture; and heat-soaking the resultant mixture at a temperature of from about 400°C to about 450°C for about 2 to about 25 hours to convert isotropic pitch to optically anisotropic mesophase pitch.
16. (previously presented) The process of claim 15, wherein said step of heat-soaking includes heating the pitch mixture in an inert atmosphere.
17. (New) The process of claim 15, wherein said step of heat-soaking is for about 5 to about 25 hours.
18. (New) The process of claim 1, wherein said step of heat-soaking is for about 5 to about 25 hours.